

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From the Office of David R. Herndon

Chief Judge, United States District Court, Southern District of
Illinois

In various parts of the United States, citizens are being targeted by phone calls and threatened with prosecution for failing to comply with jury service in federal or state courts. In addition, the court recently has heard of other scams involving a fictitious arrest warrant on a criminal charge being sent to an individual with an offer to avoid arrest through the payment of a specific amount.

In the phone calls regarding jury duty, the threat of a fine for shirking jury service is used to coerce those called into providing confidential data, potentially leading to identity theft and fraud. These calls are not from real court officials. Similarly, a valid arrest warrant would never include an offer to avoid arrest through payment of money via credit card.

Federal courts do not require anyone to provide any sensitive information in a telephone call. Most contact between a federal court and a prospective juror will be through the U.S. Mail, and any phone contact by real court officials will not include requests for social security numbers, credit card numbers, or any other sensitive information. Similarly, the validity of an arrest warrant can be verified by contacting the Clerk of Court or the United States Marshals Service without providing confidential data.

Jury duty is a vital civic responsibility and should be taken seriously by all citizens. However, it is a crime for anyone to falsely represent himself or herself as a federal court official. The federal judiciary takes seriously such an offense.

Persons receiving such a telephone call should not provide the requested information, and should notify the Clerk of Court's office of the U.S. District Court in their area. For the Southern District of Illinois, call the office of Clerk of Court Nancy Rosenstengel at 618-482-9371.